

CountyCitizen

Spring 2003

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**U.S. Army surgical teams
train at Jackson's Trauma
Center**

**Customer Service Initiative
to improve the way the
county provides services**

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SPEAKING *Of*

Congressional Delegation cashes in for Miami-Dade County

Earlier this month the people of Miami-Dade County received a very welcome and needed check in the amount of \$29,097,000. This windfall came from the federal government, and for it we owe our Congressional Delegation overwhelming gratitude.

As you may know – five members of Congress represent our community in the House of Representatives. Working together, regardless of party affiliation, this group fights relentlessly to bring appropriations to our community.

This has long been the mission of retired Congresswoman Carrie Meek. Perhaps the most beloved public servant in the County, Carrie had long been a champion of the people who sent her to Washington. As senior member of the county delegation and a member of the important Appropriations Committee, she brought a lion's share of our tax money back for projects that improved the lives of our people.

Our current delegation, consisting of Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who now heads the delegation, and Representatives Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Kendrick Meek, and Mario Diaz-Balart are continuing that tradition of steering funds for our vital county projects.

Each year, local governments like ours count on the state and federal government to help us provide better service and meet the needs of our communities.

The money we received from the 2003 Omnibus Appropriations Spending Bill will benefit vital county services and infrastructure programs.

For example, it will provide us with an extra \$3 million to buy more buses. This will help fund the transit improvements included in the People's Transportation Plan.

An allocation of more than \$12 million will be used to dredge Miami Harbor and the Miami River to allow our Seaport to remain competitive with other seaports.

Three million dollars will be used for the Empowerment Zone to revitalize distressed communities to help attract private investment that will enhance the quality of life and economic energy of these neighborhoods.

Some of the money will be used to renourish our beaches, which are being depleted by erosion. Called the Shore Protection Project, \$2 million will help maintain our magnificent beaches as an all-important tourism attraction.

Additional environmental benefits will accrue to our community through a \$200,000 fund to maintain our water quality by studying the effects of freshwater discharge into Biscayne Bay. An additional grant of \$270,000 will be used for lead testing and environmental education programs for inner-city children.

A vital county service to be funded by this money is the continuation of the Juvenile Assessment Center. This nationally acclaimed demonstration project will receive \$300,000 to develop evaluation, intervention, and treatment tools to reduce the number of delinquent youth in Miami-Dade County.

Another law enforcement benefit is a \$500,000 Homeland Security fund to assess infrastructure vulnerabilities.

There is even a \$1 million fund to purchase a helicopter for our year-round fight to eradicate mosquitoes that carry the West Nile virus and other deadly diseases.

In the months to come, I will continue to cooperate with all the members of the Delegation on many other projects. I particularly look forward, to working with Representative Mario Diaz-Balart, a new member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, to help us carry out the Peoples' Transportation Plan.

Please join me in thanking these great public servants who serve their community so well in Washington D.C.



Customer Service Initiative

New program to improve the way Miami-Dade County provides services to its residents

Our sole purpose at Miami-Dade County is to serve our residents. We do not only want to meet the needs of our valued customers, we want to exceed them! I firmly believe that the only sure way to fulfill the needs of the people of our community is to continuously strive to improve our services and the way we deliver those services.

That is why Miami-Dade County has implemented a Customer Service Initiative that will dramatically enhance the way employees provide assistance to residents. The program, which began on Feb. 1, 2003, requires a countywide strategy for improving customer service. Unlike other programs in the past, this one utilizes existing staff that will work across departmental lines. A cornerstone of this initiative will be the implementation of a countywide call center so that residents will have a single number to call for government service and questions about their service.

One of the main elements of the initiative is to develop standards for providing and measuring service satisfaction. Earlier this year, as we reported in the Winter edition of the County Citizen, Miami-Dade County mailed out a Resident Satisfaction Survey to 15,000 randomly selected residents, to gather input directly from residents to determine the benefits and effectiveness of county services. The survey was not simply a collection of data. The survey is results-oriented. The County’s Office of Performance Improvement will be using the results in conjunction with information it has received from residents, elected officials, county administrators and members of the business and academic community, to develop and implement a strategic plan for the county.

The Customer Service Initiative also must allow for us to educate our customers so that they are aware of the services Miami-Dade provides and solicit feedback about what the customers truly want. I personally look to achieve that goal by cooperating in even closer contact with county residents. In March 2003, we launched County Connection, a live one-hour television show on Miami-Dade TV that allows me to interact on the air with county residents, via telephone and e-mail. So far, the show has been a great success, generating dozens of phone calls and emails. Each upcoming show will introduce a main topic that will be the focus of the hour-long exchange of ideas. Juan Mendieta, Director of the Miami-Dade Communications Department is hosting the show that airs on the first Monday of every month from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

I am also a firm believer in using technology to improve services and communication with residents. As part of the Customer Service Initiative, the county needs to be able to apply technology as a means to provide self-service to the public. Residents, visitors, businesses and employees are able to access Miami-Dade County government at any time through the county’s web portal miamidade.gov.

In order for our employees to efficiently serve county residents, it is our responsibility at Miami-Dade County to ensure that our workforce has the tools and training they need to provide excellent service, and are recognized for the contributions they make to our success. One of the new departments I am most proud of at Miami-Dade County is the new Employee Recognition Department. This department is devoted to rewarding outstanding employees for work both on and off the clock. I also recently introduced sending weekly emails to county employees in an effort to increase internal communication.

We have already made so many strides in working to expand customer service. I am pleased to report that the County’s Office of Performance Improvement completed its second year of the countywide “Secret Shopper” program, designed to evaluate and improve the county’s customer service. Working with municipalities to explore opportunities for providing seamless service to the public is an essential component of the Customer Service Initiative. Just last month, with our help, the City of Sunny Isles Beach unveiled its new website.

Customer service is an essential part of everything we do. With the Customer Service Initiative as our guide, we will continue to focus on improving our services, providing a hassle-free and accessible government to the residents of our fine county. As usual, if you have any suggestions about the ways we can improve service, please don’t hesitate to call me directly at 305-375-1032 or email me at manager@miamidade.gov. I am so proud to work shoulder to shoulder with all of you, and, don’t forget, we’re more than county employees, we’re neighbors.


Steve Shiver
County Manager



New Miami-Dade Homeland Security Director hired to lead division’s efforts to intensify security and response

By Aimee Artiles, Communications

Former City of Miami and Miami-Beach official, Joseph Piñón has been hired as the new Miami-Dade Homeland Security Division Director. In Dec. of 2002, County Manager Steve Shiver created the Miami-Dade Homeland Security Division charged with developing better local coordination of anti-terrorism efforts. Piñón reports directly to Samuel Williams, the Assistant County Manager for Homeland Security and Public Safety.

Piñón’s responsibilities include assisting Williams in the coordination and provision of a variety of countywide services including homeland security and updating the county’s, comprehensive countywide Terrorism Response Plan.



Joseph Piñón, Homeland Security Division Director

“Joe’s extensive knowledge and experience in law enforcement and government will contribute a new level of excellence to the County’s Homeland Security Division, all while bringing an enhanced level of safety for everyone in the community,” said Miami-Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas.

“The creation of a strong and efficient Miami-Dade Homeland Security Division is a critical step for the county,” said Commissioner Joe A. Martinez, Chair of the Public Safety Committee. “Security has always been a top priority for the county and in hiring Mr. Piñón, we are only continuing our efforts to ensure that all Miami-Dade County residents and visitors are safe.”

Piñón most recently served as vice president of operations for

GOOD

Government

MIA’s new tower – provides better and safer service

By Tere Estorino, Miami-Dade Aviation

Miami International Airport’s (MIA) new air traffic control tower is now operating, offering the flying public the safest service available.

This state-of-the-art facility, commissioned and managed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), stands an impressive 333 feet tall, second in the nation only to Orlando International Airport’s tower, and is 111 feet higher than the old tower.

MIA required a new tower because the expansion of the airport’s A-D Terminals would block the view of certain areas of the airfield from the old tower. The total cost of the project was \$24.9 million. The Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD) funded \$19.7 million, and the FAA funded \$5.2 million.

“This new air traffic control tower is another example of our commitment to providing our passengers with the safest, most efficient service,” said MDAD Director Angela Gittens “It is part of our \$4.8 billion Capital Improvement Program, an airport expansion plan that will make MIA one of the most modern, user-friendly airports in the nation.”

Designed to withstand 150-mile-per-hour winds, it can be fully operational immediately after a category five hurricane. The building and electronics and communications



MIA’s new 333 feet tall air traffic control tower is 111 feet higher than the old one.

systems are equipped with advanced lightning protection, critical to maintaining equipment operating during severe thunderstorms. High-tech security systems protect the facility. It incorporates fiber optic technology to enhance communications and reliability between electronic equipment in the new tower cab and existing radar room. The 850-square-foot tower cab accommodates 12 controller positions, and is 26 percent larger than the old 625-square-foot cab. With more than 470,000 operations in the year 2001, the MIA tower is the 14th busiest tower nationwide.

County Manager Steve Shiver recognizes Miami-Dade’s workforce for their charitable efforts

By Hernando Vergara, Communications

Miami-Dade County Manager addressed employees during the county’s United Way Recognition Luncheon held at the Miami



U.S. Army surgical teams get ‘Hands-on’ training at Jackson Memorial Hospital Ryder Trauma Center

More than 275 military physicians, nurses and paramedics have strengthened their clinical skills since 9/11



Jackson Memorial Hospital’s Ryder Training Center provides hands-on clinical training to more than 275 U.S. army surgeons.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 275 U.S. Army surgeons, nurses and paramedics have received hands-on clinical training at Jackson Memorial Hospital’s Ryder Trauma Center.

Ryder-trained Army surgeons and nurses have already been deployed to field locations in Southwest Asia, including Afghanistan, to serve U.S. military personnel. “By getting these Army physicians and nurses ready for care, we’re serving our soldiers,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Knuth, M.D., director, army trauma training program. “That’s the bottom line.”

In 2001, the U.S. Army selected the Ryder Trauma Center as its Army Trauma Training Center to enhance the clinical skills and experience of the Army’s forward surgical teams. The U.S. Air Force began its training program in January at the University of Maryland R.A. Cowley Shock Trauma Center and the U.S. Navy will train at Los Angeles County Hospital.

Monthly, 25 U.S. Army and Army Reserve medical providers a month are assisting in Ryder trauma cases under the supervision of the board-certified surgeons from the University of Miami School Of Medicine. Eventually, more than 60 Army surgical teams deployed around the world will come to Jackson Memorial Hospital for four-week rotations.

“For the U.S. Army surgical teams, it is a great benefit to have a concentrated educational experience with a high volume of trauma patients,” said Stephen Cohn, M.D., chief, trauma and surgical critical care division at the University of Miami School of Medicine. “In terms of the university and Jackson Memorial Hospital, it’s an honor to be the sole Army training site for all their surgical teams.”

As a teaching facility with faculty from the School of Medicine, Jackson Memorial Hospital offers a high-volume, real-world setting for this type of military-civilian collaboration, according to Dr. Cohn. Last year, the Ryder Trauma Center handled 3,518 trauma cases, including victims of vehicular accidents, gunshot wounds, burns, falls and industrial accidents.

GOOD *People*

Forensic mortuary technician at the Medical Examiner Department

Elechukwu Andrew Hepburn-Okehi

By Larry Cameron, Medical Examiner Office

The recent popularity of television shows like CSI and CSI – Miami have focused attention on the world of forensic science. In our community the Medical Examiner Department is charged under the law to investigate all criminal and suspicious deaths.

Persons interested in any sort of career in forensics or the science of death investigation need to possess a high degree of curiosity – one of the traits that Elechukwu Andrew Hepburn-Okehi uses to describe himself.



Elechukwu Andrew Hepburn-Okehi

Born in Nigeria, Hepburn-Okehi arrived in the United States at the age of four, attending schools in Clarksburg, West Virginia, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, before completing his high school work locally at Miami Springs Senior High School. Currently he is completing a degree in biological sciences at Florida International University (FIU), where he is a senior. In conjunction with his studies, he began volunteer work at the Medical Examiner Office (MEO) several years ago, accepting a full-time position as a “morgue tech” in the year 2000.

Nine cases arrive at the MEO on a daily basis and usually include at least one homicide, one suicide, one or two traffic fatalities, and an assortment of other deaths that require some investigation and certification. A staff of medical doctors – forensic pathologists – is on hand to conduct the necessary examinations and/or autopsies, and they are assisted in their work by the staff of forensic mortuary technicians. These “morgue techs” must have a thorough knowledge of biology and anatomy as they work side by side with the doctors. This is the work that attracted Hepburn-Okehi to the Medical Examiner Office.

The fact that his father is a veterinarian probably influenced Hepburn-Okehi to some degree in his life’s course, and he says that classes in science, particularly biology, have always been his favorite. When he completes his Bachelor’s degree at FIU in the next year, he hopes to score well enough on the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) to enter medical school.

Hepburn-Okehi describes himself as a “serious student,” and his interests in school as well as in his personal life confirm that description. In addition to his pre-med studies, Hepburn-Okehi has developed a strong interest in Japanese language and culture. Not only has he pursued classes in those areas, he also says that he was happy to receive recently a book on how to cook sushi so that he can refine his culinary skills. Hepburn-Okehi is not intimidated in accepting and pursuing challenges.

Although his work and his studies do not permit extensive outside reading, Hepburn-Okehi enjoys classical literature when he does read. Some of his favorite authors include Machiavelli The Prince, Dante The Divine Comedy, Goethe, Homer and Virgil. He also enjoys books on philosophy. Recently Hepburn-Okehi was interviewed

Once more, Miami-Dade TV Honored... award-winning station receives five prestigious Bronze Telly Awards

By Phares Poliard, Communications

Miami, Florida – Miami-Dade Television (MDTV) has been honored in the 24th Annual Telly Awards competition with FIVE PRESTIGIOUS BRONZE TELLY AWARDS. The honored Miami-Dade productions include three regularly produced series: Miami-Dade Now, Downtown Dade, and Down To Earth. Also receiving Bronze Telly Awards were two special projects, “24 Hours in Miami-Dade County” and “Everglades Restoration”.

Founded in 1980, the Telly Awards showcase and recognize outstanding non-network and cable commercials. Additionally, the competition is expanded to include both film and video productions. For the past several years, the Telly Awards received in excess of 10,000 entries annually from all regions of the USA. Silver Telly Awards are the highest honor, won by only about 7 percent of the entries. A Bronze Telly is awarded to finalists in the competition, which represents about 15 percent of the entries. The Telly has become one of the most sought-after awards in the TV, commercial and video industry and represents winners and finalists from all 50 states.

“The whole Miami-Dade TV staff is proud and grateful to have been awarded the 2003 Bronze Telly,” said Carol Higgins, MDTV Executive Producer. “We are working constantly to improve our programs in order to bring the most informative and entertaining shows to the residents of Miami-Dade.”

MDTV has been in the spotlight numerous times before. In fact, this is the second consecutive year MDTV has received Bronze Telly Awards. In fact, three of the station’s productions were honored in 2002.

“Miami Dade TV provides us with a unique opportunity to present superior and diverse programming for our community,” said County Manager Steve Shiver. “I am extremely proud of the MDTV staff and the national recognition of our hard work and top-notch programming.”

Miami-Dade TV is Miami-Dade County’s government access cable TV station, televising county meetings and public information programming 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It appears on channel 34 on all cable systems in the county with these exceptions: AT&T Miami, Channel 31; AT&T West, Channel 14, AT&T Aventura, Channel 38; Moffat Cable, Channel 62. The Miami-Dade TV program schedule is available on the county web portal miamidade.gov.

New program offers assistance to pay water and sewer charges to residents in specific municipalities

By David Allison-McPherson, Community Action Agency

Community Action Agency’s Self Help Institute has implemented a new program to assist residents living in specific municipalities with the high cost of water and sewer charges.

The Life Support Initiative Assistance Program (LSIP) provides up to \$400 per household in financial support to individuals and families residing in specific municipalities within Miami-Dade County who need help with their water and sewer charges. The program is only available to residents in the following participating municipalities: Florida City, Homestead, West Miami, Opa-locka, Hialeah, Hialeah Gardens and North Miami.

For additional information, individuals may contact the CAA Life Support Initiative Assistance Program by calling 305-347-4640. Persons interested in applying for

NEWS

and Notes

Taiwan performers donate aboriginal artifacts

The Office of Community Relations’ Asian Affairs Advisory Board was the recent recipient of the largesse of the Ataya Art and Dance Company, aboriginal performers from Taiwan. Program Officer, Chiu-Mei-Ko and his troupe presented more than 20 artifacts from the region to Miami-Dade County officials who will share the gifts with several Asian Cultural Centers, before permanently displaying them at a Miami-Dade County college or university. The event took place at the New World Dance Theater in mid February.



From left, Dr. Larry D. Capp, Executive Director of the Office of Community Relations is being presented a Taiwanese aboriginal back sack by Ku-Yueh Yin, Lo-Wen Chun and Mohammad Shakir of the Miami-Dade County Asian American Advisory Board.

Firefighters use thyme wisely

By Shari Holbert-Lipner, Fire and Rescue

Thyme, parsley, radishes, pole beans, red cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, and more – these are the items growing in the garden at Miami-Dade Fire Rescue’s Kendall South Station No. 23 at 7825 SW 104 Street.

Several years ago, a firefighter working at the station decided that, rather than pulling weeds continually from the patch of ground surrounding the property, he could put the area to better use. He began with a small herb garden.



Soon everyone at the station, on every shift, began to take part, and a real transformation took place. Many of the men and women who work there have a green thumb, and they planted a variety of vegetables.

The garden is considered “semi-organic,” since they use a little pesticide when needed. But the produce certainly can’t get any fresher and rivals the best found anywhere. The dinner

Miami-Dade conducts Turkey Point drill

By Hernando Vergara, Communications

Officials from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Federal Emergency Management Office were recently in Miami to assess Miami-Dade County’s ability to respond to a radiation leak at the Turkey Point Nuclear Power plant in South Dade.

The exercise, coordinated by the Miami-Dade Office of Emergency Management involved representatives from Florida Power and Light, Miami-Dade Fire-Rescue, Police, and Communications departments. During the three-part drill, Miami-Dade demonstrated its ability to quickly evacuate residents in the surrounding ten-mile radius of the plant.



From left: Mike Stone, public information officer (PIO) for the Division of Emergency Management, Florida Department of Community Affairs; Becky Sherrin, PIO for Monroe County Sheriff’s Office; Hernando Vergara, Senior Media Relations Coordinator, Miami-Dade County; Bob Acosta, Director of Nuclear Assurance for Florida Power and Light (FPL) and Rachel Scott, Manager of Nuclear Communications for FPL address members of the audience participating in a drill simulating a release of a radioactive substance at the Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant in Miami.

“This drill gave us the opportunity to rehearse the county’s response involving public safety officials so that we can have a systematic way of responding to this type of emergency,” said Steve Shiver, Miami-Dade County Manager.

During the various stages of the drill, Miami-Dade activated the Reception and Monitor Center at Tamiami Park enabling the county to check individuals and their vehicles for possible contamination. The last portion of the drill took place at the Emergency News Center at FPL Headquarters in Miami where communications staff from FPL and the county rehearsed disseminating information to the general public.

In the event of a real emergency at the Turkey Point nuclear power plant, residents in the vicinity of the facility would be asked to immediately review the “Safety Planning Information for Neighbors of FPL’s Turkey Point Nuclear Plant” pamphlet and to stay tuned to WIOD-610 AM, WINZ-940 AM, WQBA-1140 AM and WAQI-710 AM for official instructions and emergency information. If necessary, alert messages would be broadcast via emergency warning sirens, and the Miami-Dade Answer Center, 305-468-5900, would be activated.

For additional information on Miami-Dade’s emergency response visit the Emergency Management’s website at: <http://www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/oem/home.htm>



Port of Miami Traffic and Transportation Taskforce kicks into high gear

By Trenae Floyd, Seaport



The Port of Miami has approximately 40 shipping lines calling on more than 100 countries and 250 ports around the world.

Charged with the task of streamlining vehicular congestion, officials at the Dante B. Fascal Port of Miami-Dade decided to expand the Traffic and Transportation Taskforce to include additional members. Originally named the Miami-Dade County Trucking Taskforce, the organization now encompasses representatives from the taxi industry, chambers of commerce, Miami-Dade Consumer Services Department, Miami-Dade Police Department, and union trucking companies.

“We look forward to working together with this expanded group of professionals,” said Miami-Dade Manager Steve Shiver. “Our ultimate goal is to expedite business and travelers in and out of the port.”

“This is an all-inclusive body of professionals in the transportation industry coming together to address issues that will work for the betterment of all parties involved,” said Seaport Director Charles A. Towsley. “While the organization has traditionally focused on trucking concerns, our mission has been expanded to address broader issues that may arise while the Port of Miami undergoes construction over the next three years.”

Those construction enhancements include building two new parking garages, upgrading two existing cruise terminals and redesigning the main artery to separate cruise and cargo traffic.

“Our goal is to make this transformation period as painless as possible,” said Towsley. “The key to all of this is communication. We’re confident that the Taskforce will help us keep the lines of communication open.”

Correction

GOOD Service

People’s Transportation Plan (PTP) Update

The People’s Transportation Plan continues right-on-track improving and adding new services. To this end, the Nominating Committee for the Citizen’s Independent Transportation Trust (CITT) held their first meeting on Feb. 18, 2003. The Committee is composed of the following 20 members:

- Chief Judge Joseph Farina, Administrative Office of the Courts
- Katherine Fernandez-Rundle, Miami Dade State Attorney’s Office
- Honorable Jay R. Chernoff, North Miami Beach Councilman
- Bobbie Ann Brinegar, President, Miami-Dade League of Women Voters
- Henry Crespo, Executive Director of the Urban League
- R. Terry Cuson, Chairman, Coalition of Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce
- John Dixon, Black Business Association
- Father Roberto Garza, President, People Acting for Community Together
- Adolfo Henriues, CEO, Southern Banking Group of Union Planters Bank
- Frank Hernandez, Chairperson, Citizen’s Transportation Advisory Committee
- Billy Hester, Chairperson, Community Council 8
- Bill Isley, President, Unrepresented People’s Positive Action Council
- Willis Murray, Alliance for the Aging
- Loretta Pieze, 2nd Vice President, NAACP, Miami Chapter
- Gene Prescott, President, Biltmore Hotel
- Dr. Mark B. Rosenberg, Provost & Executive VP for Academic Affairs, FIU
- Kerry Rosenthal, Chairperson, Ethics Commission
- Ernesto Saborido, Director, MDCC School of Business
- Lucie Tondreau, Board Secretary Haitian American Grassroots Coalition
- Robert Weinreb, Urban Environment League of Greater Miami



Commissioner Bruno Barreiro speaks during the dedication of the Florida International University South Campus bus terminal.

Following are some accomplishments since the November 2002 election:

- Miami-Dade Transit has hired 79 new employees since November 5th and is slated to hire an additional 93 during the next three months. Total new hires by the end of the year will be approximately 807. These will include 495 new bus operators, 82 bus mechanics and 47 transit operations supervisors.
- Implemented on Nov. 6, 2002 free fares for Metromover and free transit for Miami-Dade citizens age 65 and above.
- Initiated the Little Haiti Connector, the Little Havana Circulator and the Coconut Grove Circulator in November and December of 2002; made improvements to 12 existing Metrobus routes (i.e. longer hours, weekend service, etc.)
- Ordered 100 full size buses for new and/or enhanced service for June 2003 delivery.
- Dedicated and opened the new Florida International University (FIU) Bus Terminal Facility servicing approximately 1230 passengers per week.
- Opened the South Miami-Dade Busway 168 Street Park and Ride facility on Dec. 16, 2002.
- Broke ground on the South Miami-Dade Busway; Phase II, segment I from SW 211 Street to SW 264 Street.
- Implementation of the Coral Way Max on Jan. 21, 2003.
- The Hialeah Gardens Connector and the Sweetwater Circulator began service.
- Purchased 70 new mini-buses, ten of which started service in March of 2003 the remaining will start service throughout the year.

Miami-Dade Transit expands bus service

By Michael De Cossio, Miami-Dade Transit



Miami-Dade Transit recently launched the Coral Way MAX minibus service, linking major business and commercial areas along Coral Way, including downtown Coral Gables, the Westchester Shopping Center, and the Las Americas Shopping Center. The new route provides faster weekday rush-hour service between SW 142 Avenue and 37 Avenue along

DIRECT

from the District

District 1

Commissioner Betty Ferguson honors Miami Norland Senior High School team

In February, Commissioner Betty Ferguson honored members of the Miami Norland Senior High School Varsity Football team at a Board of County Commissioners meeting for their exemplary achievements on and off the playing field.

The team won the 6A Florida High School activities Association Football State Championship during the 2001-2002 playing season through the combined efforts of the Miami Norland Senior High School family and the players' determination, sportsmanship and great heart. They demonstrated a cooperative spirit of unity and discipline in sacrificing their time and effort to accomplish this goal.

Members of the team also participate in a monthly church fellowship, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, as well as neighborhood and church clean up community projects.



Commissioner Betty T. Ferguson (far right) along with Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler and Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle join the Miami Norland Senior High Football team and their coaches and teachers in honoring them for a fantastic 2001-02 season.

District 2

Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle brings sidewalks to district's Liberty City area



Commissioner Dorrin Rolle

A beautification project in Liberty City, led by Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle and launched by the Miami-Dade Housing Authority, is underway. The plans to lay sidewalks in parts of Liberty City - bound by NW 17 Avenue to the east, NW 22 Avenue to the west, NW 62 Street to the south and NW 71 Street to the north - broke ground on Dec. 4, 2002. The cost of this project is approximately \$250,000 to \$300,000.

These sidewalks are the first in a series of upcoming projects that will enhance the quality of life and enjoyment of the community. For the many seniors who helped build the community and continue to reside there, this is just the beginning of their labors paying off.

Area residents, merchants and business people were thrilled to hear of this latest project.

"This is wonderful," said Melvin Sanders of 1871 NW 68 Terrace. "Before, I had to walk with my children in the street and now I am at peace knowing that sidewalks are in place to keep them safe."

District 3

Commissioner Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler initiates tax credit publicity campaign; speaks at State of the County Address

The Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution on Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2003, sponsored by Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler that expressed her intent to conduct a publicity campaign urging county residents to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Care Tax Credit (CTC).

The EITC, a Federal tax credit for eligible individuals and families, is a frequently overlooked program that provides refunds of up to \$4,140 a year for a family with two or more children with a household income of less than \$33,178 a year.

The Commission joins in the efforts already begun by Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas and the city of Miami. Chairperson Carey-Shuler is urging area municipalities to follow the county's lead and inform their residents about this generous tax incentive. Chairperson Carey-Shuler's office has also requested the local media to provide assistance with educating the public on how to apply for the additional tax breaks.

"Many of our lower-income residents are unaware of this program," said Chairperson Carey Shuler. "It is our goal to provide them with as much information as possible in order for them to receive this credit."

On Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2003, Miami-Dade County Commission Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler delivered a speech at the State of the County Address, the first time in eight years that a Commission Chairperson addressed those in attendance since voters approved the Executive Mayor position. Now that county legislative power rests solely with the Commission, the Commission Chair presented her vision for the future.

"Each of us on the county commission have made a commitment to the people of this county," said Chairperson Carey-Shuler. "We will continue using our experience, leadership and good old-fashioned hard work to effectively lead this county government into an even greater entity."

The functions now performed by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) include: the selection of its own chair and vice chair; the creation of committees and the naming of committee chairs and vice chairs by the BCC Chairperson; committees having the authority to hold public hearings; and the BCC Chairperson presiding over commission meetings and deciding in consultation with the county attorney and county manager when items go to committee and when they are set on the commission agenda.

The BCC also created the office of Commission Auditor to provide the commissioners with budgetary, audit, management, revenue forecasting and financial analyses independent of the County Manager's Office.



District 4

Commissioner Sally Heyman visits districts municipalities; facilitates overhaul at Haulover Beach

County Commissioner Sally Heyman recently made site visits to each of the 13 cities within her district. Her objective was to meet with community leaders and take county government to them.

“It’s imperative to bring the umbrella of county government closer to the local municipalities and firmly establish a hands-on relationship,” said Commissioner Heyman. “I can’t find a better way to do that than by visiting each city individually.”

At the initial meeting, several of the cities shared concerns regarding each of their municipalities including sidewalk repairs, traffic congestion and funding delays. Each of these matters was immediately addressed and set in motion to be resolved. However, the most important concern, from all of the cities, was the availability of limited funds to be secured at the county and state levels.

Commissioner Heyman’s goal is to continue visiting each of the cities within her district to ensure lines of communication are kept open.

Thanks to the combined efforts of Miami-Dade Park and Recreation director Vivian Rodriguez, her staff and Commissioner Sally Heyman, the decayed and crumbling concession stand at Haulover Park, the North Dade regional public beach located between Bal Harbour and Sunny Isles Beach, was demolished in January to make way for a new multi-purpose building.



Commissioner Sally Heyman in demolition equipment with lifeguards from Haulover Beach and Flavio Guevara, track hoe operator.

park were started in a timely fashion. Structural repairs have begun to the Lifeguard Operations building. Trailers to temporarily serve the construction site have already been installed.

“It was high time this project took place,” said Commissioner Heyman. “In its glory, the concession stand withstood the ravaging winds and waves of Hurricanes Betsy and Donna and catered to hundreds of thousands of beach patrons. But it was just beyond repair.”

The new building, part of a \$24-million park renovation initiative, will house beach operations and provide beachgoers with a more aesthetically pleasing environment. Commissioner Heyman has worked with director Rodriguez to ensure the repairs to the park were started in a timely fashion. Structural repairs have begun to the Lifeguard Operations building. Trailers to temporarily serve the construction site have already been installed.

“We just need to continue to move forward and cut out the delays,” said Commissioner Heyman. “The men and women who work here need an upgraded environment to do their job. We will bring Haulover back and beyond to new levels of public use and enjoyment.”

District 5

Commissioner Bruno A. Barreiro hosts town hall meeting about tax credits



Commissioner Barreiro alerts constituents on the advantages of receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

Commissioner Bruno A. Barreiro, District 5, hosted a Town Hall Meeting in February at Riverside Elementary and Community School in Miami. He provided his constituents with information on tax preparation and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Representatives from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Human Services Coalition also made special presentations.

The EITC, a Federal tax credit for eligible individuals and families, is a frequently overlooked program

that provides refunds of up to \$4,140 a year for a family with two or more children that has a household income of less than \$33,178 a year.



Constituents pay close attention to the presentation highlighting the EITC.



Commissioner Barreiro welcomes Joe Grimes, EITC Coordinator

District 6

Commissioner Rebeca Sosa sponsors motorcycle Fire-Rescue unit; Helps dedicate new playground at AD Barnes Park

Accident victims trapped in the traffic gridlock of South Florida will soon have emergency care at their side in a more expedient manner, thanks to a new pilot program sponsored by Commissioner Rebeca Sosa. Fire Rescue personnel from Miami-Dade County have received 10 emergency response motorcycles donated by BMW of North America. These units are refurbished California Highway Patrol motorcycles, equipped with sirens and emergency lighting, and will be outfitted with automatic external defibrillators, oxygen and other emergency medical supplies.

Lt. Roman Bas, Program Manager for the Motorcycle Emergency Response Team (MERT), is responsible for the research and development of the pilot program. Initially the team will consist of four units with two personnel each assigned to different

specialized units could play a vital role during post-disaster reconnaissance. One of the lessons learned from Hurricane Andrew was the difficulty of navigating through massive debris in order to reach patients in need of emergency medical care.

On Jan. 30, more than 75 area students and residents showed up to meet Sesame Street’s Big Bird and Cookie Monster and enjoy the new playground at AD Barnes Park, 3701 SW 70 Avenue in South Miami, during a dedication ceremony hosted by Miami-Dade County Commissioner Sosa and the Miami-Dade Park and Recreation Department.

This project was funded with \$92,000 from Capital Outlay Reserve Funds (CORE).

DIRECT

from the District

District 7

Commissioner Jimmy L. Morales pushes for release of Haitian children detainees; presents computers to students



Commissioner Jimmy L. Morales

The Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution sponsored by Commissioner Jimmy Morales on Dec. 17, 2002 that urged the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to release 11 Haitian children who arrived on the shores of Key Biscayne on Oct. 29 2002 and were being detained without parental supervision. Commissioner Morales and Haitian community activists also held a press conference that day in the lobby of the Stephen P. Clark Center downtown to petition for the children's release. The efforts of Commissioner Morales and other local lawmakers and community activists led to school-age children being allowed to attend classes and recreation activities in December and some of the children to be released in February.

The 11 children who were held at the Boystown Catholic Home for Children in West Kendall were in some cases separated from their parents at Krome Detention Center, handcuffed with plastic restraints during transport to their detention locations, and then housed in hotel rooms without access to learning activities, recreation or fresh air before being moved to Boystown.

"I think one of the greatest injustices to the Haitian immigrants being detained by INS are the children who have been separated from their families for over a month," said Commissioner Morales. "It would be a wonderful treat for these children to

be released to their relatives or, in some cases, foster home families, who they can share the holidays with."

On Jan. 22, Commissioner Morales presented new home computers systems to two students from Coral Gables Senior High School and Ponce de Leon Middle School. The students were nominated by faculty and staff from the two schools, which are within the Dade County Public Schools' feeder pattern for the West Coconut Grove area included in Commissioner Morales' district.

The two students were: Quinella Mays, a senior at Coral Gables Senior High School who is focused on graduating from high school, has shown a great deal of interest in her classwork, and enjoys using the computer in the classroom; and Quinesha Watson, a seventh grader from Ponce de Leon Middle School who works hard to keep up her grades in advanced-level classes, which require extensive research and lengthy papers. She is also a role model for her siblings and cousins who live with her.

Three years ago, Commissioner Morales began the Jimmy Morales Charitable Fund to bridge the technological divide that continues to widen and hinder the economic and educational achievement for many students. "Little by little, home by home we can all make a difference," said Commissioner Morales. "It is wonderful to see such outstanding students in our community. Both Quinella and Quinesha are model students and are bound for a bright future. I couldn't be more honored than to be able to award these young women for their accomplishments."

District 8

Ordinance inspired by Commissioner Katy Sorenson creates the Children's Trust Fund

The Board of County Commissioners passed an ordinance sponsored by County Commission Vice Chairperson Katy Sorenson on Dec. 3, 2002 that officially creates The Children's Trust, approved by voters on Sep. 10, 2002 to oversee social services for the children of Miami-Dade County in the areas of health, development, safety and parental and community responsibility.



Commissioner Katy Sorenson

The ordinance establishes the composition of the 33-member governing board of The Children's Trust, which will include Mayor Alex Penelas, County Manager Steve Shiver, Miami-Dade Public Schools Superintendent Merrett Stierhiem, and representatives from the Board of County Commissioners, the Miami-Dade County School Board, Florida International University, Miami-Dade Community College, the Florida Department of Children and Family Services (DCF), the County Public Health Department, the Dade State Attorney's office and other local and state agencies and organizations.

"I was extremely proud to sponsor this legislation, which provides a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of our children," said Vice-Chairperson Sorenson. "The Children's Trust will help to better coordinate the efforts

of all the children's services organizations in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible, and most importantly, in the best interests of the children of Miami-Dade County."

The Children's Trust is funded by a one-half mill ad valorem tax, which will be

District 9

Commissioner Dennis C. Moss works toward progress for Metrozoo, cleaner streets and new cultural center



Commissioner Dennis C. Moss

Commissioner Dennis C. Moss has taken numerous steps in recent months to make his South Miami-Dade district a brighter and better place to live for all residents in the area. On Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2002, the Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution sponsored by Commissioner Moss that urges the Florida Legislature to authorize expansion of the Enterprise Zone located in the county to include Miami MetroZoo and the area surrounding it.

The Enterprise Zone is an area designated by the State within Miami-Dade County that offers fiscal incentives to businesses that locate or expand within the zone, with the objective of encouraging investment and job creation in economically distressed areas.

"The land surrounding MetroZoo is a prime location for the county to focus on creating a major theme park district," said Commissioner Moss. "There is potential to generate a great deal of revenue along with the creation of many job opportunities."

Expansion of the enterprise zone to include Miami MetroZoo is designed to increase development of the park area, which would enhance its attractiveness and maximize attendance. This resolution will be considered a part of the state legislative package for the 2003 general session.

In January, County Commissioner Moss kicked off an initiative he calls his "reviving

District 10

Commissioner Javier D. Souto helps bring major equestrian events to Miami-Dade County and sponsors a community clean-up campaign

In February, Miami-Dade County’s Tropical Park Equestrian Center hosted the 2003 U.S. League Finals and Freestyle Championship in Dressage, the prestigious national competition of guiding horses through complex maneuvers. Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas and County Commissioner Javier Souto, whose commission district encompasses Tropical Park, spearheaded the effort for Miami-Dade to be named the host city for the competition. Two of the competitors were selected to represent the United States in the World Finals in March and may qualify for this Summer’s Pan American Games.

“Having Miami-Dade County as the host for the 2003 U.S. Freestyle Championship signifies a wonderful honor and opportunity for the community and its world-class facilities,” said Mayor Penelas. “As an enthusiast of the sport, I must say, that this wonderful event gives the community an opportunity to experience great competition, all of this, while promoting the county’s economy and tourism industry.”

“It has been a life-long dream for me to see Miami-Dade County be the host of an event of this stature,” said Commissioner Souto. “We have a state-of-the-art facility at Tropical Park, and I am ecstatic that the park and the county will be recognized on a prominent, national stage.”

While helping to bring national prominence to the county this year, Commissioner Souto has also been busy with his “Don’t Toss It Out, Toss It In,” community clean-up campaign. During the campaign’s first event of the year at Everglades Elementary on Feb. 27, 2003, Commissioner Souto helped members of the student body pick up trash around the school. This campaign is one of many projects Commissioner Souto has spearheaded in an effort to preserve the county’s precious environment, beautify the community and improve the quality of life for the residents within his district.



Commissioner Souto welcomes guests during the 2003 U.S. League Finals and Freestyle Championship in Dressage, a prestigious national competition of guiding horses through complex maneuvers held at the county’s Tropical Park Equestrian Center earlier this year.

District 11

Commissioner Joe A. Martinez hosts film star; gets important education initiative passed

Commissioner Joe A. Martinez had a brush with Hollywood in February when he served as Honorary Chairman of the South Florida Inner-City Games (SFICG) and hosted film star and social activist Arnold Schwarzenegger at the organization’s Annual Celebration Youth Rally. During the event, Schwarzenegger honored more than 2,000 Miami-Dade County middle school students for their participation in the organization. Schwarzenegger, National Chairman of the Inner-City Games Foundation, brought the Inner-City Games programs to Miami-Dade County in 1995 and promised, “I’ll be back.” Commissioner Martinez in welcoming Schwarzenegger was also joined by Florida Attorney General Charlie Crist.

“This partnership marks a positive step in educating our youth and reducing overall crime in Miami-Dade County,” said Commissioner Martinez.

In January, the Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution sponsored by Commissioner Martinez that granted \$100,000 of re-allocated county funds to Florida International University (FIU) and Madrid University to create the Madrid Center for Education, Research and Development. The initiative allows both institutions to establish cooperative educational programs and to carry out collaborative research projects on issues of common importance to South Florida and Greater Madrid such as immigration, economic development, and information technology.

“This is an important initiative for South Florida, higher education professionals and students,” said Commissioner Martinez, who has been an avid contributor and supporter of several educational projects, locally and statewide throughout the years. “Having this positive interaction between two countries’ resources and the emphasis on key issues like immigration and the economy provides a huge benefit to all of us. Perhaps this will enhance South Florida as an innovator in international education and research.”

Originally, the \$100,000 grant was reserved for the ESPN X-Games, which was to be hosted by the county but eventually selected another site for its event.



Commissioner Martinez joins film star/social activist Arnold Schwarzenegger and several middle school students for the South Florida Inner-City Games Annual Celebration and Youth Rally, held earlier this year at the Florida International University’s South Campus.

District 12

Commissioner José “Pepe” Diaz raises funds for American Cancer Society; helps break ground for new daycare facility

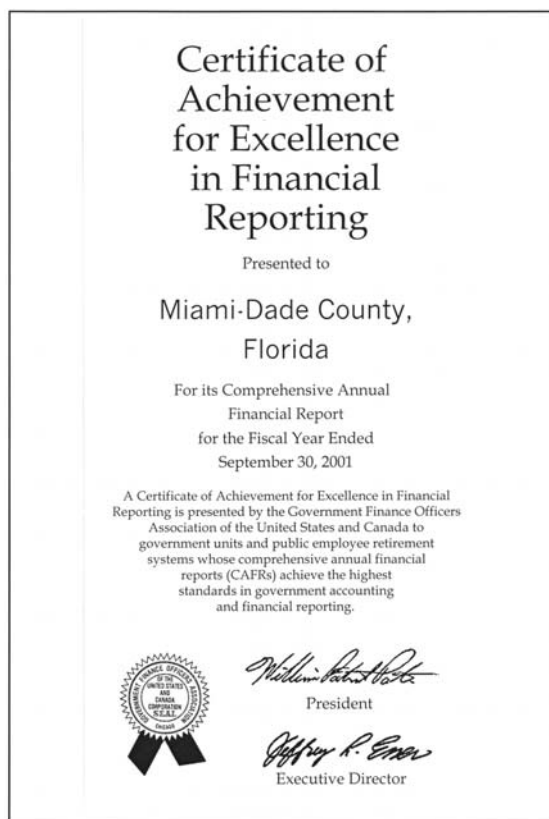


Since being elected to the County Commission last September, Commissioner José “Pepe” Diaz has worn many hats, which have included most recently serving as the honorary chairperson of the American Cancer Society’s Doral Relay For Life, the annual community fundraiser to promote cancer awareness. During the two-day event in February, Commissioner Diaz joined his family and members of his District 12 staff in a variety of activities that included live entertainment, games, cancer awareness programs, and an 18-hour walk/jog/run contest for fitness-conscious participants.

GOOD *Programs*

Procurement Management receives coveted accreditation from the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing

By Jill Klaskin-Press, Procurement Management



In January 2003, the Miami-Dade Department of Procurement Management (DPM) received the coveted Outstanding Agency Accreditation Achievement Award from the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP). The reward formally recognizes excellence in public purchasing.

“We are extremely excited about this recognition,” said DPM Director Ted Lucas. “This accreditation will have a significant impact on Miami-Dade’s procurement process, increasing our program’s credibility, recognition and improving bond ratings.”

To receive accreditation, participating agencies must demonstrate their ability to meet or exceed NIGP’s rigorous standards. These include 57 mandatory activities related to mission and strategy, organization, authority and responsibility, planning and

scheduling, personnel and professional development, best practices, audit and evaluation. Optional standards include property management, cooperative purchasing, automated purchasing systems, and electronic commerce. Accreditation certification is valid for three years at which time the agency will be required to re-accredit.

To learn more about the NIGP Agency Accreditation Program, or for a list of all the winners, visit: www.nigp.org/memberservices/Accred.htm

Light a candle for a child

By Chris Nagel Feeley, freelance writer

On any given day there are more than 1,851 abused, abandoned, and neglected children involved in the Miami-Dade County 11th Judicial Circuit’s Juvenile Dependency Court. Three children, most under five years of age, die in this country every day from child abuse, while the actual incidents of abuse and neglect are estimated to be three times greater than are reported to authorities.



As part of National Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month, Voices For Children Foundation, Inc., which supports Miami-Dade’s Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) program, has reached out to the community to support Light of Hope Day, on Apr. 3, 2003. This national candle-lighting ceremony will find government agencies, local businesses, community venues and places

of worship all across America striving to illuminate 8,000 candles which represent the number of children who are reported abused and neglected each day in the U.S.

In our own community, the Aventura Mall will hold a Candle Lighting Ceremony on Apr. 3, 2003 and will host “Picturing Ourselves” an exhibition by children in the system that focuses on their life through their words and photographs. The project is a joint effort of The Supreme Court of Florida, The 11th Judicial Circuit, Photographer Sharon Gurman Socol, and Voices For Children Foundation, Inc. The exhibition will run for the first two weeks in April at Aventura Mall and then move to the Herald lobby through Apr. 30 where they will host an exhibition reception.

At the same time WFOR CBS Neighbors 4 Neighbors will be running a series of announcements educating the community on the Guardian Ad Litem program and recruiting GAL volunteers.

Miami-Dade County Government will also recruit GAL volunteers through faxes, e-mails and other printed materials explaining how to become a guardian.

“It is our hope at Voices for Children that these efforts will build the community’s awareness of the needs of these children who come from all religious, ethnic and economic backgrounds, and who desperately need our help,” says Nestor Rodriguez, Executive Director of Voices. “Part of our mission is to make sure every child in the system has a guardian, someone to speak on their behalf.” Adds Rodriguez, “Trained GAL volunteers visit the child at home, report findings back to the court, and appear in court as a Voice for the child. You don’t need any legal or social work training. All you need is to care about the kids.”

“Light of Hope Day” is sponsored nationally by The National CASA Association, and the opening candle lighting ceremony will be held Apr. 3, 2003 at Bryant Park in New York City. For more information on the Guardian Ad Litem Program please call the Miami-Dade County Guardian Ad Litem office at 305-638-6861.

Team Metro and Miami-Dade Police Department partner to assist the needy

By Suzanne Salichs, Team Metro

On the afternoon of Jan. 11, 2003, the Team Metro Melrose Office received a phone call from Evelyn Montano, an ill, unemployed mother of four, who stated that she was in desperate need of food for her family. Montano said that she had nothing to feed her children and that her seven year-old daughter suffered from hypoglycemia.

After taking the call, Team Metro Outreach Specialist Roberta Pasquier and Team Metro Melrose Regional Coordinator Suzanne Salichs made unsuccessful calls several

Due to the quick thinking of dedicated Team Metro staff, partnering closely with the ever so helpful and responsive Miami-Dade Police Department, the Montano Family was immediately assisted. Montano was touched by the gesture and most appreciative.

Since then, Viaud and Pasquier have followed up with Montano to monitor her situation and to provide additional assistance to her and her family.

eGovernment

Miami-Dade County’s web portal a “Top Pick” in the nation

Miamidade.gov receives national recognition as MuniNet names Top Picks for 2002

By Alison Steinberg, Communications

Miami-Dade County is once again being honored for its innovative website. MuniNet has named the site one of the best in the country as part of its annual recognition of exemplary web portals, “Sites That Rise Above the Crowd: Top Picks for 2002”.

Each year, MuniNet chooses city and county government websites from throughout the country that stand out among their peers, offering users useful information and the ability to interact in a sophisticated format. This year www.miamidade.gov was one of three county government websites chosen as a “Top Pick”.

“We are thrilled to be recognized for our efforts to bring information, resources and services to our residents’ through the Internet,” said County Manager Steve Shiver. “At Miami-Dade County, we know that our residents are our customers and we work hard to make them feel valued. Our website is one of our main priorities and we are delighted that residents are benefiting.”

In order to qualify for this year’s “Top Pick” recognition, websites needed to include elements such as a comprehensive annual financial report, a budget, two-way communication, council agenda/minutes, municipal code/zoning ordinances, community profile, economic development information, current news and/or commentary from the CEO and some online service delivery.

All “Top Pick” websites also had to inform residents, increase government accountability and provide communication opportunities, while also offering innovative features or style, a pleasant presentation and a sheer amount of information. In 2002, there was a progressive increase in the use of the county’s web portal, and the online services that it offers. There were about 6.7 million visits to the county’s web portal and departmental websites, 240,000 library books were renewed online, nearly 60,000 electronic payments were made for items including parking tickets, occupational licenses and building permits, and an average of 375,000 property searches were conducted monthly.

The county’s site has been distinguished several times before with other notable awards. The county came in second place in the “Best of the Web Award 2002”, and in fourth place for the “Best of the Web Award 2001”. Miami-Dade County was also named a finalist in the “Stockholm Challenge 2002” and the “Global Junior Challenge 2002”.



Countywide Secret Shopper program completes second year

By Marla Warner, Office of Performance Improvements

The results are in, as Miami-Dade County completes its second year of the Secret Shopper Program. After “shopping” all customer service interface points, the county received an overall score of 3.6, on a scale of one to five. This is certainly above average.

The Secret Shopper Program enables the county to evaluate service delivery and identify areas of improvement to meet public needs and expectations. This year’s results were based on 6,820 shopping experiences using three evaluation methods: secret shoppers posing as citizens requesting a county service; exit interviews with people who used county services; and shoppers requesting service by telephone.

“I am pleased that the county’s current customer service level is above average,” said Miami-Dade County Manager Steve Shiver. “However, our objective is to achieve an excellent rating in all areas of service to the public. One of my primary initiatives is to enhance customer service, and the Secret Shopper program is one tool we are using to track results.”

Overall, this program gives the county the ability to compare service delivery for an extended period of time, identifying trends in specific areas. For example, scores for the Planning and Zoning Department increased from 3.5 to 3.7 over the two-year period, confirming that customer service initiatives are working.

As the county continues to focus on providing exceptional service throughout our community, more of these programs will be implemented to support this goal.

Countywide Secret Shopper program completes second year

By Marla Warner, Office of Performance Improvements



Miami-Dade County Manager Steve Shiver was the guest speaker during a recent broadcast of “Small Talk” a community radio show on WAXY 790-AM.

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GOOD *Community*

Miami-Dade Water and Sewer department celebrates milestone

By Toni-Anne Blake, Water and Sewer

Employees of Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department (WASD) recently celebrated a significant milestone in their ongoing program of sewer system evaluation and rehabilitation. This milestone was marked with a pipe-signing ceremony held in the lobby of the department’s Douglas Road headquarters.

“As one of the largest public utilities in the country, repairing and maintaining our collection system at peak efficiency is going to be an ongoing project, but this is the first time we have gone through and checked and made repairs in the entire collection system,” said Rodney Lovett, chief of the department’s Sewer Collection Division. “Being able to reach this high point is a tremendous achievement for the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department.”

In 1995, the department started a program to reduce the infiltration/exfiltration/inflow in its collection system. Under an agreement with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), 330 WASD employees and outside consultants worked tirelessly inspecting WASD’s entire collection system – cleaning, televising, smoke testing, surveying, evaluating, rehabilitating and making 57,000 repairs – more than 12.8 million feet of gravity sewer lines.

“I am particularly proud of the employees who have worked long and hard on this project,” said Miami-Dade WASD Director William Brant. “We are fortunate to have a group of conscientious and hard working people who are committed to seeing this program through and to helping the department run as efficiently as possible. It is only because of their efforts that we can celebrate this accomplishment.”

With the repairs that have been made so far WASD has seen a reduction of about 118 million gallons a day in sewer flows and a reduction in sanitary sewer overflows of more than 90 percent. For the water utility this has meant that huge expenditures to build new wastewater treatment plants will be avoided.

“This project has allowed us to save a significant amount on the cost of new infrastructure and to reduce the likelihood of future expenditures associated with inflows and overflows,” said Brant. “These savings mean that Miami-Dade residents will continue to enjoy efficient service and some of the lowest rates anywhere in the country.”

Hialeah Courthouse breaks ground

The two-story 35,000 square foot facility will provide convenient access to court services

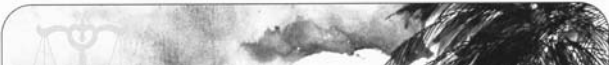
By Victoria Arias, Office of the Courts

Chief Judge Joseph P. Farina of the 11th Judicial Circuit of Florida, Clerk of the Courts Harvey Ruvin, Hialeah Mayor Raul L. Martinez along with members of the Hialeah City Council, officially broke ground, on Jan. 30, 2003, making way for the construction of a brand new courthouse in the City of Hialeah. The \$7 million, two-story 35,000 square foot courthouse will provide Hialeah residents and surrounding communities with convenient access to court services. The groundbreaking ceremony and the subsequent construction of the courthouse exemplify what happens when city, county and state governments work together for the benefit of the entire community.

The original Hialeah Courthouse was closed in July 1997, and since that time cases and parties were redirected to surrounding court locations. In October 2001, world-renowned architects, Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum were awarded a contract to begin planning and designing a new courthouse. The new Hialeah Courthouse facility will house two county Court Judges, staff from the administrative office of the Courts and the Clerk’s office. There will also be a separate parking garage across the street behind City Hall.

The color scheme and design of the new building are based on old Cuban imagery and will be a lovely addition to Hialeah’s downtown. The new Hialeah Courthouse will offer residents the ability to obtain marriage licenses, pay parking fines, satisfy mediation requirements and pursue small claims. The courthouse will also have a Domestic Violence Intake service area, which provides information, counseling and help when applying for restraining orders. The Hialeah Courthouse is scheduled to open its doors in March 2004.

To find out the requirements to obtain a marriage



Disaster gives birth to new county department, restores American Dream

By Tarnell Carroll, Communications

No one can forget the level of devastation and despair left by Hurricane Andrew in August 1992, especially the Miami-Dade County residents personally affected by the storm. But for the hundreds of residents who lost their homes and personal belongings, nothing could have been more damaging than being bilked for thousands of dollars by unlicensed contractors, who promised to restore the American Dream of its victims. The individuals falsely representing themselves as professional contractors gave birth to a term perpetuated by the media, “roofers from hell.”



With assistance of the Code Compliance Investigation Section Mrs. White was able to recover \$9,000 from an unlicensed contractor.

Thanks to the efforts of concerned residents, county officials and others, immediate action was taken to put an end to the unscrupulous practices of these phony contractors, with the creation of the Code Compliance Investigations Section, a full service department of nine highly trained investigators who work diligently to eliminate unlicensed activity and address citizen complaints. The Section investigates complaints concerning the work of unlicensed contractors from property owners and other individuals who believe they are victims of unscrupulous construction labor. Last year, the Section investigated more than a

thousand cases reported by contractors and homeowners. As a result of these cases, 136 criminal charges were filed with the State Attorney’s Office and 453 tickets were issued.

GOOD *Community*

Miami Art Museum’s Neighborhood project reaches out to students in Overtown

By Winter Morea

MAM in the neighborhood, a community project launched last summer, is committed to broadening the scope of the museum’s outreach efforts to under-served youth. This year’s project involved students from Overtown who produced a documentary-style video about their neighborhood, including the Historic Lyric Theater. Under the guidance of MAM’s staff, students learned how to conceive storyboards, conceptualize



Students from Overtown film documentary about their neighborhood.

themes, write scripts, and develop a soundtrack. They were also required to write daily assignments, participate in art workshops, and take weekly tours of South Florida cultural institutions.

The program, possible through a generous grant from The Miami-Dade Empowerment Trust, presented its premier on Feb. 23, at the Historic Lyric Theatre in Overtown. The film titled Overtown in the Making is a reflection on the social and cultural history of this significant neighborhood, as seen through the stories, images, and people who live there. Overall, students felt the Historic Lyric Theatre was the best venue to portray their message as the theater represents the history of the community. Through this project, students gained an appreciation of the “Overtown they never knew,” and the experience gave them a new founded hope of positive change.

Ribbon cutting marks opening of new entrance at Palm Springs North Trash and Recycling Center

By Gayle R. Love, Solid Waste Management

With the flick of the wrist, Miami-Dade County District 13 Commissioner Natacha Seijas used ceremonial gold scissors to cut the ribbon draping the new entrance to the Department of Solid Waste Management’s Palm Springs North Trash & Recycling Center. The ribbon cutting activity marked the official opening of the long-awaited new entrance to the site. The Department designed and constructed the new entrance and access road in response to concerns from Palm Springs North residents living adjacent to the old entrance. Located on N.W. 178 Street just west of N.W. 78 Avenue, the new entrance redirects traffic away from residential properties and reduces inbound traffic congestion that was frequent at the old entrance.

“This entire project is an excellent example of coordination between three County departments, the County Commissioner’s Office and concerned citizens. It proves that with good communication, we can work to develop solutions that benefit the communities we serve,” said DSWM Assistant Director for Trash Operations Kathleen Woods-Richardson.

Beautification campaign improves community around Scott homes and Carver homes

By Javier Morejón, HUD

A new campaign, designed to help homeowners residing around the Scott homes and Carver homes community, is off to a rousing success. The program has repainted and re-landscaped 158 homes since its inception in August 2002.

The HOPE VI Beautification campaign works as part of the HOPE (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) VI revitalization program and is overseen by H.J. Russell & Company, HOPE VI Program Managers. It helps homeowners in an area bordered by NW 17 Avenue, NW 22 Avenue, 62 Street and the F.E.C. Railroad beautify their properties. Many homeowners in this area lack the necessary funds needed to paint and re-landscape their properties.



Ava Johnson-Garner proudly shows her remodeled home. She was able to make improvements to her house with funds provided by the HOPE VI Beautification campaign.

This initiative, funded by a \$1 million annual allocation from the County’s Surtax program, involves only exterior painting and landscaping in its scope of services, but residents who are in need of extensive renovation work can apply for up to \$20,000 in loans from the Miami-Dade Housing Agency (MDHA). H.J. Russell & Company is one of the largest minority-owned business firms in the country and has participated in other HOPE VI initiatives nationwide.

“This is a win-win situation. Not only will homeowners in the community surrounding the Scott homes and Carver homes developments have a chance to improve the physical condition of their properties, but it will give residents a chance to participate in the economic revival of the community through employment and contracting opportunities,” said District 2 Commissioner Dorrin Rolle.

Ava Johnson-Garner is one resident who has taken advantage of the campaign to improve her property. “It’s a good program to help the community, and I’m glad that I was able to have my home painted because this is the home that I live in; the home I bought from my great-grandfather. It was important for me to keep it looking neat.”

MDHA won a \$35 million HOPE VI grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (U.S. HUD) in 1999 to revitalize the Scott homes and Carver homes public housing properties. The grant will be leveraged to a \$100 million revitalization that will result in a viable, sustainable community that provides opportunities for residents to achieve homeownership goals and reach economic

CALENDAR

of Events

Celebrate National Library Month at your county’s libraries

MARCH

The Miami-Dade Public Library System will be buzzing with programs, exhibitions and special events this spring. April, National Library Month, will find community leaders reading to children at branch libraries. Additionally, the Library System will be inaugurating a new branch library in Naranja on April 24. Additional branches are slated to open in May through July in the areas of West Tamiami, Doral and Lakes of the Meadows.

APRIL

April is also National Poetry Month with lots of special programming planned.

May programs will feature celebrations of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and Haitian Heritage Month. The Library System’s annual storytelling festival will be held on May 10th at the Main Library. The Art of Storytelling...In Other Words, will feature storytellers from Ghana, the Caribbean and the US.

For more information, please visit the Miami-Dade’s Public Library System’s web site at mdpls.org.

Crandon Park offers fun recreational activities for all ages

By Laura Phillips, Parks and Recreation



Miami-Dade County’s Crandon Park on Key Biscayne is truly a recreational paradise for all ages, from its pristine lagoon style beach to its seaside family amusement area with old fashioned carousel to its first class, full service Crandon Marina with dockside dining to its world renowned Crandon Golf course and Crandon Tennis Center and its new, state-of-the-art nature center that offers exhilarating eco excursions.

Naturalist guided canoe, kayak and snorkeling trips will transport you to the forgotten side of Key Biscayne. It’s an area thriving with wildlife both in the water and on the shore. Manatees and nurse sharks have been seen on this route, along with herons, ibis and other wading birds. Along the way you'll hear about the history and folklore of the early Spanish explorers and pioneers. Biscayne Bay also offers unique snorkeling destinations! Its tranquil waters are the resting place of the historic Half Moon shipwreck, which is now an artificial reef teeming with brilliant tropical fish and the site of one of the few remaining fossilized



mangrove reefs in the world. And last but not least, you’ll experience the best view in town-a breathtaking Miami skyline!

Eco Adventures are rated from easy to extreme. Even if you have never canoed, kayaked or snorkeled before, Miami-Dade Parks’ professionals will show you the basic skills needed to have lots of fun. The park also offers cabana rentals, hayride and tram tours, dive boat tours, charter fishing vessels, sailboat and powerboat rentals and much more! For addiional information on any of the excursions mentioned and for reservation details, call Eco Adventure Tours at **305-365-3018** and visit our web site at: www.miamidade.gov/parks.

CUT it Out

Emergencies 911

Police Non-Emergency305-4 POLICE

Fire Non-Emergency.....786-331-5000

Team Metro Neighborhood Service Centers

Downtown.....305-375-4845

North Central.....305-626-7976

Caleb Center305-636-2333

Northwest305-557-2171

Kendall305-270-4979

South Dade.....305-234-1510

Melrose305-638-7231

University305-222-2133

Northeast.....305-947-9858

West.....305-480-1700

Answer Center

(Open M-F, 8am-8pm)305-468-5900

Animal Services Unit.....305-884-1101

Bus and Rail Information.....305-770-3131

Center for Employment Hotline ...305-375-5725

Community Councils305-375-2842

Consumer Protection Hotline.....305-375-3677

Consumer Service Switchboard ...305-375-1250

County Manager.....305-375-1032

Jackson Health System305-585-1111

Libraries305-375-BOOK

Park & Recreation.....305-755-7800

Parking Violations305-275-1133

Mosquito Control.....305-592-1186

Traffic Signals Out.....305-592-3580

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MIAMIDADE

Alex Penelas, Mayor

Board of County Commissioners

Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, Chairperson

Katy Sorenson, Vice Chairperson

Betty T. Ferguson

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Dorrin D. Rolle

District 2

Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler

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District 6

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District 7

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District 8

Dennis C. Moss

District 9

Senator Javier D. Souto

District 10

Joe A. Martinez

District 11

José “Pepe” Diaz

District 12

Natacha Seijas

District 13

Harvey Ruvin, Clerk of Courts

Steve Shiver, County Manager

Robert A. Ginsburg, County Attorney

MIAMIDADE

Miami-Dade County provides equal access and equal opportunity in employment and services and does not discriminate on the basis of disability.